
DE News



April 6, 2001 - Iowa Department of Education - Ted Stilwill, Director

From the Director's desk:

- ***Budget continues to cause concern***
- ***Teacher quality continues progress***

Legislators are still preparing their response to Governor Vilsack's revised budget recommendations, but it's clear they plan a dramatic response to our slowing revenue growth.

We are hearing rumblings that their reductions likely will exceed the 6% reductions proposed by the Governor for some state departments and programs. Even more startling, some legislative leaders also have suggested that the \$40 set-aside promised for teachers may now be at risk. Lawmakers had previously said the teacher-pay fund would be excluded from all budget cuts, as would other priority programs like K-12 state aid. Although no one has put K-12 state aid on the table, we recognize that budget concerns have reached a very high level -- and that means we must be diligent both in advocating for our priorities and in offering our own reductions where we can.

Decision-making in times like these is extremely difficult -- especially when we are negotiating on overall teacher compensation policy, the success of which depends directly on the funding.

Teacher quality policy progress

Even while keeping the budget concerns in mind, the teacher quality policy work-group is making very good progress toward agreement on the key elements: salary increases,

induction/mentoring, career tracks and professional development. I'm hopeful that we'll see a new bill introduced within the next week or so.

How much will you get?

A big portion of the teacher quality policy outlines salary increases for all teachers, both new and experienced, in all districts.

You can find out how much of the \$40 million your district would receive by going to the Teacher Compensation Proposal headline on www.state.ia.us/educate/.

The proposed allocations (parceled out using a formula based 50% on enrollment and 50% on number of teachers) are listed by district. For instance, Cedar Rapids is slated to receive between \$950,000 and \$1.1 million, depending on the final policy language; Mount Vernon would receive between about \$55,000 and \$64,000; Pleasant Valley would receive between \$153,000 and \$179,000.

More than \$31 million of the \$40 million in funding will be targeted specifically to salary increases for teachers statewide -- and most of the salary money (a total of \$18 million or nearly 58%) will go to veteran teachers. About \$13 million will be allocated to beginning or mid-level teachers. Please note that the actual distribution within the districts will vary markedly. Districts that already pay comparatively high salaries for beginning teachers will have much more funding available for veteran teachers.

Please be sure all educators in your district understand the plans for funding and our commitment to increasing all teacher salaries. Your support is very important as we approach legislative debate on this issue.

Other legislation of interest

We reached a funnel deadline this week, meaning that legislation that hadn't received appropriate committee approval is no longer eligible for consideration.

Some bills "died" in the funnel (although a few, marked with an *, could be revived as appropriation bills). Bills that did not survive the funnel are **HF 575**, which would have extended the legislature's deadline to set allowable growth; **SF 197***, which would have continued the community college technology funding; **SF 468**, which would have allowed school districts to seek SBRC approval to pay high energy bills using unspent balances; **HF 660***, which would have increased the sales and use tax by one cent for school infrastructure; and **HF 355**, which would have moved the school start date to the third Monday in August.

Legislation that is still active includes:

HF 576, which provides for certain school finance issues, including a 101% guarantee of the previous year's regular program district cost, reorganization incentives, and student weighting at regional academies. In Ways & Means subcommittee.

SF 203, budget guarantee for FY02 and FY03. Passed Senate; in House Appropriations with a House Education Committee amendment that would strike everything and insert HF 576 (see previous bill).

SF 348, establishing charter schools. Passed Senate; approved by House Education Committee.

HF 674, establishing a process for voluntary AEA reorganization. Passed House; in Senate Education.

HF 670, allowing alternative licensure for K-12 administrators and teachers. Passed House; on Senate calendar.

SF 480, requiring the Department to study elimination of community college licensure, including related issues of tenure. Passed Senate; approved by House Education.

International programs available

Districts have an opportunity to tap into a wide variety of international programming by joining SCOLA, Satellite Communications for Learning.

SCOLA, based in McClelland, Iowa, is an internationally based non-profit consortium of educational institutions. Using satellite technology available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, they share educational resources and programming.

For more information, go to scola.org on the Web or call 712/566-2202.

Send in your survey

Superintendents, remember to complete and send in your survey on AEAs. Your input and insight will be an essential part of our AEA Reorganization study.

The survey can be found at www.aea11.k12.ia.us/servlets/AEACustSat01.tp3. Password is aeasurvey. To receive a paper version, call 515/281-6131.

Visit the DE on the Web

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